

Woodcock Hunting Summary 2004-2005

Sherburne Wildlife Management Area
Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge

The 2004-2005 woodcock hunting season marked the twelfth year that hunters were required to check in and out through self-clearing stations. This procedure was initiated because of the area's traditional high use by woodcock hunters and ongoing woodcock management and research projects. However, the number of hunt characteristics gathered was reduced simply to flushed and bagged because of standardization of the Department's hunter check cards to accommodate all WMA users.

The season was considered fair overall with periods being good to excellent on the area this year as evidenced by participation and bag. Woodcock hunting occurred on at least 30 of the 45 days that the areas were open to hunting. Hunters reported 172 trips that resulted in bagging 230 woodcock (Figure 1). The 2004-05 season hunter efforts and bag increased from the prior year by at least 22% and 46%, respectively. During December, at least 52 persons recorded hunts and 30 were woodcock taken. Success improved during January when 120 trips yielded 194 woodcock for an average of 1.6 per trip. During January, there were several trips with > 10 woodcock flushed.

Warm, dry weather is believed make for poor woodcock hunting in Louisiana. During November, December, and January, rainfall was +1.7", -2.2" and -2.1" from normal. The lack of rainfall was tempered to some extent due to +6.4" of rain during October. However, the site was generally extremely dry except immediately after periods of hard rain. Additionally, temperatures were +6 °, +4 °, -3 °, and +6 ° for October through January, respectively. Despite having these conditions through much of the season, hunting was good to excellent at times. Woodcock prefer sites with high soil moisture. Adequate soil moisture is necessary for woodcock to probe the soil for earthworms and other invertebrates. Dry conditions make probing difficult and causes earthworms to migrate deeper into the soil. Woodcock were usually found in the moister regions of the field complex.

Woodcock Hunter Success 2004-05 Hunting Season



Figure 1.